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## CORRESPONDENCE.

## ENGLISH METRES.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES:

SIRS:—I feel confident you will kindly open the columns of your valuable journal for a few remarks upon the two reviews which have appeared in American periodicals of my 'Neu-englische Metrik,' namely, an anonymous article on the first part of it, which was published in the *Nation* for May 1., 1890, and another article, on the whole work, by Dr. F. B. GUMMERE, which appeared in MOD. LANG. NOTES, vol. iv, p. 145 ff. (1889).<sup>1</sup>

First of all, let me acknowledge my indebtedness to the authors of these articles—as well as to the author of the review of the first volume of my work, which appeared in the *Nation* for Oct. 12, 1882—for the painstaking way in which they have executed their task. I am the more grateful to them, inasmuch as, apart from a very able review in the *Scots Observer* (July 27, 1889), and another one which will appear shortly, as I am told, in the *Cambridge Journal of Philology*, none of the great English periodicals, so far as I know, have hitherto taken any notice of the work. Altogether, it appears to me (and, I have no doubt, to many other German students of English philology as well) that the interest in the scientific study of the English language and literature is much keener in America than it is in England.

This being the case, it is evident that the criticisms passed on the 'Neuenglische Metrik' in the leading American periodicals, cannot be matters of indifference to me as regards either the praise bestowed, which is more than the book deserves, or the fault found with it in respect to certain details—criticism which in several instances I believe to be undeserved. Permit me, then, to point out here the more important points on which I would call in question the remarks of my critics.

Thus, the anonymous reviewer in the *Nation*—for the sake of convenience I shall call him

<sup>1</sup> We have received from Prof. J. M. HART of Cornell University the following communication:

"I am the author of both the *Nation* reviews referred to by Prof. Schipper. Although not shaken in my views, I am too grateful to him for his services in behalf of the history of English metres to shrink from applying the good old maxim, *Audi alteram partem*."—Eds.

Mr. A—says (p. 356): "Among the errors of a general nature we note the author's disposition to regard his own statement of Anglo-Saxon verse (in vol. i) as conclusive. This statement might have passed eight years ago, but should now be readjusted to the new method established by Sievers." Now, whatever my shortcomings may be, I cannot plead guilty to the general charge of overvaluing my own work; nor can I yield the point in this particular case. The first part of Prof. SIEVERS' excellent paper was published in vol. v of the *Beiträge* (1885), of which Mr. A. undoubtedly is a careful reader. So he must have noticed that in vol. xi there is an article on the metre of the Anglo-Saxon poem "Judith," based entirely on SIEVERS' principles. This article was signed KARL LUICK, and dated Vienna, March 18, 1886. It was written when Dr. LUICK was still a pupil of mine and a member of our English Seminary. As far as I know, Dr. LUICK, who is now *Privatdocent* in the University of Vienna, was the first who publicly adopted SIEVERS' principles, and I am proud to say that the subjects for his article on alliterative verse were proposed to him by myself, and that the treatises themselves were published with my full approval. This, of course, could not be known to Mr. A; but, in the passage following that quoted above, he must have entirely misunderstood my words. I said (p. 3) that in opposition to the regular succession of long and short syllables existing in the classical metres, in Teutonic poetry the thesis plays an inferior and more fluctuating part than the arsis. This general statement is in perfect conformity with the structure of the alliterative line, as at present elucidated by Prof. SIEVERS.

On pp. 13, 42, and everywhere else in my book, I have used the word *Altenglisch* in the sense of Early English (cf. vol. i, p. 3), quite distinct from Anglo-Saxon and Modern English. It may be that Mr. A does not like this terminology, but is he justified in saying that it is not sufficiently precise?

Mr. A objects to the assumption of a standard line. But can there be any doubt of the necessity of admitting such a line for the sake of comparison? Again, if he disputes my assertion that the coincidence of word and foot

(diæresis) always produces a disagreeable, chopping effect (instead of *always* I should have said 'generally' or 'frequently'), I may be allowed to ask Mr. A whether he would prefer a succession of a dozen verses all composed of monosyllabic words, or an equal number of verses of the usual structure, with only now and then a diæresis occurring in them.

Concerning my statements as to the suppression of the *Auftakt* and "hovering accent" I have nothing to retract, in spite of what Mr. A and Dr. GUMMERE have said against it. Although in most cases the first feature is not to be looked upon as an ornament of the verse, yet I have quoted a certain number of examples which show that it really *is* susceptible of artistic treatment. As another proof of it I have referred (pp. 242-244) to MILTON'S "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso." Dr. GUMMERE thinks I am wrong in taking this view of the metre of the above poems; his own opinion seems to be that they are a mixture of trochaic and iambic lines. But I am afraid I shall not be able to accept his opinion until he has shown that it was MILTON'S own view (and even then MILTON might have erred unconsciously, as the example of COLERIDGE shows, who thought himself the inventor of this particular kind of verse); and until he has proved that the historical method of discussing and analyzing this metre, and English metres in general, is wrong.

As to hovering accent, it certainly is, as Mr. A justly remarks, amongst the veriest commonplaces of English poets and poetasters; but it has not yet been proved that commonplaces always belong to the happiest and most refined modes of poetical or metrical expression. There is no rule without exceptions, and the example quoted by Mr. A may be one of these; I might therefore have said that this license is *usually* to be blamed, instead of *always*. But for the dissonant effect of it in most cases I have given, I think, more than a sufficient number of examples, and if Dr. GUMMERE thinks that a verse like

"O Derwent, winding among grassy holms"

is quite as good from a metrical point of view (apart from the poetical associations connected with it), as the verse:

"Among a number one is reckon'd none"

SHAKESPEARE, "Sonn." 136, 8.

"You have among you many a purchas'd slave"

ib. "Merch." iv, 1, 90.

I must confess myself unable to share in this opinion.

Mr. A believes that the translation of *nicht übeltönend* is 'not bad.' This shows that even so good a German scholar as he undoubtedly is, may also occasionally make a mistake. If I had written *nicht übel tönend* or *tönt nicht übel*, he would have been right; but *nicht übeltönend* means 'not dissonant'; the negation is to be emphasized.

The remark on p. 65 which he quotes is of a general nature, not merely referring to SHAKESPEARE, although I do not hesitate to repeat that the frequent occurrence of *light* and *weak* endings in the later plays of SHAKESPEARE is very often not of advantage to the structure of his blank verse during the fourth period of his dramatic career. If Mr. A fails to understand what I mean by an evident tendency in SHAKESPEARE'S later dramas to revert to a certain regularity, I may be allowed to explain here (although I think that it was made sufficiently clear in my book) that I had in view chiefly that matrical peculiarity in reference to which Mr. FLEAY in his 'Shakspere Manual' (p. 133) has expressed the same opinion.

Touching the phonetic difference between *Verschleifung* (slurring over of a syllable) and *doppelte Senkung* (dissyllabic thesis), there can be no doubt of its existence, although Mr. A does not seem to perceive it. I can only commend to him its reconsideration.

As to *Zerdehnung*, I admit that it may be looked upon in different ways; but as it is generally evolved through the exigencies of the metre, I thought best, in a work on versification, to treat it chiefly from a metrical point of view, not omitting, however, to point to the occasional syllabic value of the final *r* or *l*.

The terms lyric and epic cæsure are objectionable, according to Mr. A. This may be the case from a merely empirical point of view. But I think Mr. A should have refrained from blaming this in an historical treatment of the subject, such as mine is. In the first volume of my work (§§ 180, 181), I have

given my reasons for adopting these terms, which are not of my own invention, but were introduced by DIEZ in his famous treatise 'Über den epischen Vers.'

I have not said nor tacitly assumed, as Mr. A. thinks, that there must be a *cæsura* in every line (cf. i, 258, 458; ii, 24, 27). Nor was Mr. A. entitled to say that I have "echoed Guest's absurd attempt to connect Chaucer's 'Tale of Melibeus' somehow with the beginnings of blank verse," or "the cheap and puerile jibes of Campbell" concerning BYRON'S blank verse. I think I had the right to refer to the quotations of these two authors, if I thought proper to do so. Besides, neither GUEST nor I have said that CHAUCER intended to write the "Tale of Melibeus" in blank verse; on the contrary, I have distinctly stated that such an opinion must be rejected. And as far as BYRON'S blank verse is concerned, I have tried to characterize it in a few words according to my knowledge, and quoted from NICHOL'S 'Byron' the judgment which CAMPBELL passed on the versification in BYRON'S drama of "Werner." That is all. My own opinion—which is shared, however, by others, although not by Mr. A.—may be an erroneous one. But why should this be "unworthy of the book"?

Mr. A. might also have been charitable enough not to impute it to my ignorance that the ending *-es* in *certes*, which had been given already in vol. i, p. 471 as an adverbial ending, is in vol. ii, p. 92, merely to save space, mentioned under the head of a genitive-ending in *-es*; and he might have thought of the same reason for my putting in brackets the ending *-uence* after *-ience*. What would Mr. A. say, if I laid it to his charge that, in the first column of p. 357 of his article, the name of the poet whom, as he thinks, I have much wronged, is spelt both Byron and Biron, or that in the second column of p. 456 the word "synicese" is spelt with a *c* instead of a *z*?

I am glad, however, that Mr. A. likes my treatment of the various forms of trochaic verse. Only I do not see why I am more original here than anywhere else in my book.

I have to add only a few words concerning Dr. GUMMERE'S article in MOD. LANG. NOTES. As to the neglect of MATTHEW ARNOLD,

this poet, unfortunately, is not the only one I saw myself compelled to disregard. Had I been able to work out my book in the British Museum, the result would have been different, although in this case the work probably would not have appeared much before the end of the century.

Regarding the chapter on the Sonnet, the greater part of it was worked out there. Dr. GUMMERE might have taken notice of my excuse (p. 877)—that of illness—for not having been able to bring it to an end in the same way, instead of making me responsible for the many insignificant sonneteers I have quoted from 'The Book of the Sonnet' by LEIGH HUNT and S. LEE. They were not of my selection, nor—to tell the truth—was I struck with admiration of them. But if the merit of my book is statistical, this enumeration and classification of many of Dr. GUMMERE'S compatriots cannot be altogether superfluous.

The run-on line quoted from WYATT, certainly *is*, according to my judgment, dissonant; the similar remark regarding THEODORE WATTS' sonnet refers, of course, to the run-on verse connecting the first and second half of the sestet. The pause should be after the third line of the sestet instead of in the fourth, according to the strict rules of the Italian sonnet, which might have been rigorously observed in an English sonnet intended to illustrate this particular kind of poetic form.

Such æsthetic remarks, however, on run-on lines, *cæsuras*, etc., relate to the matter of taste, and I admit that many English or American critics may be much better judges of these things than I am, although the reviewer of my first volume in the *Nation* paid me the much too flattering compliment (as I always thought, and as it now appears), that I am "possessed of a thoroughly English ear."

May I be allowed to repeat that I am most grateful to the two American scholars who have reviewed my book, for having pointed out in it several mistakes, as well as for having passed upon it, on the whole, judgments so favorable.

J. SCHIPPER.

*University of Vienna.*